



County of Santa Cruz



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Health Services Agency Funded for Impaired Driving and Traffic Safety Education

SANTA CRUZ, CA – The Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency (HSA) Substance Use Disorder Services (SUDS) was recently awarded a California Office of Traffic Safety grant totaling \$100,000 to implement programs that emphasize collaboration and community education to improve community safety on local roads.

Local traffic data directed HSA to focus on impaired driving and access to alcohol. The Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project (CAP) reported that the juvenile misdemeanor DUI arrest rate per 10,000 youth ages 16-17 years increased by 13% from 2014 to 2015. Youth accessibility to alcohol through merchants, parents and social host providers, in combination with a relatively low level of impaired driver education, have become a significant public health and safety issue in Santa Cruz County. The National College Health Assessment (NCHA) conducted at University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) in 2013 shows that 26% of students reported driving after having any alcohol in the last 30 days.

Data indicates that the number of collisions/injuries of had been drinking drivers ages 21-34 is increasing. The Santa Cruz County adult binge drinking rate increased from 16.7% in 2005 to 19% in 2015, according to CAP data and this trend will continue to impact DUI arrests.

With the support of OTS, the county will be able to continue grant activities that can impact these statistics. Past actions targeted youth under 21 and young adults aged 21-34 and will continue to target these groups. Actions for 2018 include:

- DUI Place of Last Drink survey to educate and support on-sale venues to enhance Responsible Beverage Service and Sales practices to decrease impaired drivers leaving bars and restaurants,
- “Real DUI Sentencing In Schools” presentations where the courthouse is moved to high schools to build understanding of the process and consequences of DUI offenses;
- Responsible Merchant Awards honoring on and off-sale vendors who comply with or exceed requirements of the law to limit youth access to alcohol;
- Choose Your Ride safe rides campaign hosted by local bars and restaurants to ensure patrons get home safely;
- Education about Social Host Ordinances and how this impacts parents and the community;
- Outreach and education around impaired driving through community and school events;

Grant funds also support the collection and analysis of citation and adjudication data. A compilation of data will be provided to the Community Traffic Safety Coalition to be included in the countywide Vision Zero efforts to develop strategies to reduce impaired driving. Vision Zero considers any loss of life from traffic crashes unacceptable and preventable.



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